

Airlift of Ransom

Drugs Ready

CPYRGHT

CUBA CAPTIVES'

RELEASE SET

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BY ARTHUR J. SNIDER

Exchange of \$52,000, 000 in medicines and food for the 1,113 prisoners of war captured in the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba is set for "about Dec. 22," The Daily News learned Tuesday.

A huge airlift is being readied to depart on that day with 20 per cent of the ransom. The rest has been promised to Premier Fidel Castro by July, 1963.

The same planes carrying the cargo may return the prisoners in time for Christmas with their families.

HOWEVER, Ray Adell, president of the Empress of Ba-

hamas Travel Service, said in Miami that the Red Cross had accepted an offer to use without charge the 1,200-passenger liner Empress of Bahamas to ferry the prisoners.

The ship was tied up at Miami in a court battle between her Cuban owners and holders of the charter rights to the vessel.

Adell said the offer was ac-

cepted in a telegram from the Red Cross, according to the Associated Press.

Negotiations are being conducted by New York attorney James B. Donovan with the assistance of the American and International Red Cross.

Donovan flew to Havana Tuesday to complete details.

He was accompanied by three officials of the Cuban

con't.

families committee made up of relatives of the prisoners. The group had a last through the night in the Miami airport for Cuban government approval of the trip.

HEAVY security arrangements were in effect at Havana's airport, United Press International reported. Castro intelligence agents met the four-person team at the plane.

whisked them through immigration and rushed them into the city.

Cars loaded with heavily armed agents preceded and followed the sedan bearing the negotiators as they made the 12-mile trip to Havana and Mrs. Berta Barreto's suburban Miramar home.

Mrs. Barreto, Mrs. Virginia Betancourt and Alvaro Sanchez Jr., were the Cuban members of Donovan's negotiating team.

All with the exception of Mrs. Betancourt participated in previous talks with Castro. All have relatives among the prisoners.

Newsmen were barred from Havana's airfield but permitted to watch from inside the terminal the arrival of the negotiators aboard a twin-engined DC-3 chartered from Pan American Airways.

It was the first U. S. commercial transport to land in Havana in nearly two months since President Kennedy announced the naval blockade of Cuba last Oct. 20.

THE DRUGS are being supplied by members of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Assn.

Included are four Chicago area drug houses—Abbott Laboratories G. D. Searle & Co., Baxter Laboratories and Armour Pharmaceuticals. The American Hospital Supply Corp. is donating equipment.

No figure has been released on the amount of the pharmaceutical contributions, but it was learned the total will exceed \$20,000,000.

The pharmaceutical firms have been told that the donations will receive approval as federal tax deductions.

man told the Washington Bureau of The Daily News that attorneys from both its department and the Internal Revenue Service are "working overtime to expedite rulings on the tax exemptions."

THE pharmaceutical companies also have been assured that a "high-level" government official and leaders of both parties will declare these contributions to be in the "public interest."

"Otherwise, how could we justify this to our stockholders," one company official said.

IT WAS learned that the basis for the exchange was laid down several weeks ago, but the Cuban crisis interfered.

Last week, a number of pharmaceutical executives were summoned to Washington where Donovan presented to them the list of supplies that Castro demanded.

Each of the companies agreed to furnish a specified amount of the materials it produced.

It was agreed no figures would be released on each contribution but that each would donate in accordance with the size of the company.

CASTRO originally had spoken of drugs for children, but one executive told The Daily News "it was anything but a children's list."

"The list reflects a serious role in the prisoner negotiations might lead credence to Castro's claim that the Bay

among adults," he commented.

The list reflected an unusual demand for supplies that might be used in combat—such as plasma, an official said.

A large quantity of baby foods is included on the list.

The \$52,000,000 ransom was a reduction from an original \$62,000,000 demand made by Castro Oct. 12 during a speech at the University of Havana.

SOME of the prisoners captured April 17, 1961, during the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion, previously were released on payment of individual ransoms of up to \$100,000 each.

Last April, 60 sick and wounded prisoners were released and returned to Miami on "credit" against future payments.

Castro at one time was willing to accept tractors and other machinery for the prisoners, but these negotiations broke down.

PRESIDENT Kennedy, at his press conference last week, expressed again the "deep sympathy" that the administration feels for Donovan's cause, and the plight of the prisoners.

But the administration has repeatedly taken the position that Donovan and the Cuban Families Committee are acting as private citizens, without official government support, apparently because.

—If Castro were certain he was dealing with the wealth of the U.S. government, and not with private citizens, he would probably hike his demands.

ABBOTT Laboratories is now readying a donation of intravenous solutions, bulk medicinal chemicals and some antibiotics, "in accordance with the list submitted by the Cuban government," an Abbott spokesman said.

He said Abbott's role in the men-for-medicine trade is "simply a case of complying with a request from the Cuban Families Committee through the Red Cross—and only after we have been assured by the appropriate government officials that this is in the national interest and that it will attain humanitarian goals."

"This action is not related in any way to our company's feelings about how the prisoner problem should be handled," he

said, adding that Abbott has no policy in this regard.

Abbott's donation "will be so substantial we couldn't fill it immediately," the spokesman said.

EVEN with a tax break, the Abbott spokesman said, "we'll lose something."

"Some of the others may break even (but) the drug industry certainly isn't going to be making any money on this," he said.